



p53: The Gene that Cracked the Cancer Code

Sue Armstrong

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All of us have lurking in our DNA a most remarkable gene. Its job is to protect us from cancer. This gene--known simply as p53--constantly scans our cells to ensure that when they grow and divide as part of the routine maintenance of our bodies, they do so without mishap. If a cell makes a mistake in copying its DNA during the process of division, p53 stops it in its tracks, sending in the repair team before allowing the cell to carry on dividing. If the mistake is irreparable and the rogue cell threatens to grow out of control (as happens in cancer), p53 commands the cell to commit suicide. Cancer cannot develop unless p53 itself is damaged or handicapped by some other fault in the system. Not surprisingly, p53 is the most studied single gene in history.

p53: The Gene that Cracked the Cancer Code tells the story of the discovery of the gene and of medical science's mission to unravel its mysteries and get to the heart of what happens in our cells when they turn cancerous. Through the personal accounts of key researchers, the book reveals the excitement of the hunt for new cures--the hype, the enthusiasm, the lost opportunities, the blind alleys and the thrilling breakthroughs. As the long-anticipated revolution in cancer treatment tailored to each individual patient's symptoms starts to take off at last, p53 is at the cutting edge. This is a timely tale of scientific discovery and advances in our understanding of a disease that still affects more than one in three of us at some point in our lives.

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